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ABSTRACT

This bibliographical research study surveys recent literature on specific vocational training needs prevailing in rural communities and the most effective means of satisfying those needs. It also charts out a general overview of the vocational training situation in rural areas in the Member States of the European Community and in Spain and Portugal. Part One identifies the major objectives of training--those which derive from the component parts of the rural milieu and those which derive from the activities peculiar to rural life. Within the full range of the needs identified, the major part of all publications on rural vocational training attach priority to training for farming personnel. Part Two examines the development of this type of training. It addresses training supply and demand, objectives and methods of training in agriculture, and special target groups for training in rural areas: women, and individuals with a nonagricultural background. Part Two also looks at the question of the training inputs made in connection with local rural development projects that are expected to supplement the sectoral training by dealing with the social dimensions of life in a rural community and to cover the needs experienced by people engaged in other occupational fields. Part Three offers conclusions. A five-page bibliography is included. (YLB)

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Vocational training needs in rural communities

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INTRODUCTION

This bibliographical research study commissioned by CEDEFOP is intended primarily to provide a survey of recent literature on the specific vocational training needs prevailing in rural communities and the most effective means of satisfying those needs. The study is also intended to chart out a general overview of the vocational training situation in rural areas in the Member States of the European Community and also in Spain and Portugal.

The scope of the research is confined to continuing training since the very concept of rural community implies an adult target group. Nonetheless, all occupations, encountered within such communities, not merely agricultural occupations, are taken into account. Initial vocational training, thus, is excluded from the report.

As prescribed, the survey is based on the documentation published over the past few years and includes the reports and studies on this subject commissioned by Community institutions. A list of some 400 references was drawn up initially, with the Federal Republic of Germany, Italy, and France each contributing more than one hundred titles. This list was then reduced to some sixty works and documents which were subsequently procured; just over thirty ultimately proved to be of significance for the preparation of this report.

Vocational training is but one element of a broader problem complex in rural areas; the collection of reference data took place on the basis of keywords such as social advancement in rural areas, agriculture and training, vocational training, upgrading of the rural context, and, more particularly, local and regional development.

Two distinct aspects emerge from the mandate. Firstly, in which European countries is vocational training in rural areas an explicit issue, and in these, what is its context and dimension? Secondly, what training needs are manifest in rural areas and how do they find expression? Moreover, the issue relates to rural communities, that is to say groups of persons with no distinction being made as to age, employed/non-employed; their only common feature is their shared rural surroundings.

In many European countries, the issue of vocational training in rural areas does not exist as such simply because no training is available in such areas. This is true of Greece and Portugal. In other countries, efforts stop short of any specific approach to continuing training for the rural population (excluding agricultural training). This is the case in the Netherlands, Denmark, and Spain. Accordingly, a Dutch report on a recent study on vocational training in rural areas in Europe incorporates the following phrase: "Vocational training other than in agriculture in rural areas thus does differ from that in cities."

The reports formulated in other countries on the same subject (Great Britain and Belgium) likewise indicate the absence there of any real polemical approach to the question of training in rural areas: where such training is necessary, efforts are merely made to introduce contextual considerations into existing training provision. In the Federal Republic of Germany, it is stressed that all vocational training, irrespective of type, has long since been regionalized. France and Italy have traditionally located the subject of training in rural areas within the framework of the regional decay process and, by extension, within the framework of the measures taken to revitalize these areas.

Continuing training in rural areas is therefore either a sectoral type of training which is specific to agriculture or a more complex and intricate type of training for the entire local population in areas where development measures are being prepared or implemented. With regard to farmers, who normally represent only one third of the working population in rural areas, their continuing training is well documented in all the countries under review.

With regard to development projects, as a source of training opportunities, such projects are not in evidence everywhere, and are by no means necessarily evident in rural areas. Such a project might be an attempt to revitalize a localized pocket of industry, the opening up of an impoverished rural region, or the aesthetic and social rehabilitation of a small village.

At first sight, it is only in the latter category that one might speak of a need for training in rural communities. However, the shift in emphasis in the vocational training provision for the farming population indicates an increasingly acute awareness of the social dimension of agricultural work;

training for production tasks is in decline in relation to training in the administration and management of the farm unit and training to promote the integration of the farming population into the local community.

A global view of vocational training in rural areas must commence by identifying the major objectives of training: those which derive from the component parts of the milieu and those which derive from the activities which are peculiar to rural life.

Within the full range of the needs identified, it is found that the major part of all publications attach priority to training for farming personnel; the development of this type of training is examined in the second part of this study, with separate provision being made for the spouses of farmers.

The training inputs made in connection with local rural development projects are expected to supplement the sectoral training by dealing with the social dimensions of life in a rural community and also to cover the needs experienced by persons engaged in other occupational fields. The third part is devoted to a stocktaking look at this question.

PART I: THE RURAL MILIEU

Objective Needs of the Rural Milieu

The rural milieu in contemporary Europe presents a number of characteristic features which have distinct implications for the training of the individuals and communities which it comprises. But the documentation on this subject, even that setting out to deal specifically with the rural milieu, belies a fundamental inability to define its subject: it rapidly moves away from the concept of the rural milieu towards an approach which makes room for only one of its aspects: the regional or agricultural milieu or peasant society. The customary forms of categorization, such as those found in statistical material, fail to cover all the aspects of the concept, and when dealt with in administrative language, the rural milieu is always understood in terms of regional development.

A number of mutually reinforcing elements always emerge in the overall view which the individual holds of rural life: there is reference to a specific territory, a particular type of surroundings, a specific population type, etc. It is more important in rural areas than in urban areas that the interrelationships between these elements should not be overlooked—the interlinkages between the tool and the occupation, the individual and the community, the territory and its residents. Sectoral training as we normally find it (employment/training) fails to penetrate below the surface of the needs of people working in rural areas.

We shall now examine each of these elements in turn, identifying their implications from the training viewpoint. Farmwork, because of its overriding importance in these areas, will be examined separately.

1. A specific territory

The rural milieu firstly relates to a particular territory. A geographical accident can provide a city with a particular stamp, but it can go as far as identifying a region (the Po valley, the Scottish Highlands, the Polders). Furthermore, the boundaries of that territory are imprecise. One document even stresses the purely subjective and totally relative nature of the concept of a region's extent. As much as by virtue of any territorial dissection, it is the sense of belonging experienced by the local population which determines the boundaries of their territory. The concept of a region thus has a twofold dimension: geographical and affective.

Although a sense of belonging does not necessarily signify a genuine attachment to a locality (one may feel an affinity for Provence, but because of Marseilles) it does represent a need to have roots and is thereby the first point of departure for training purposes. Insofar, training should include efforts to upgrade local dialects and, more generally, contemporary or traditional local skills: the Dutch farmer is an expert in hydraulics just as precision engineering forms part of agricultural expertise in Switzerland.

Today, farmers and farmworkers are no longer the only managers of the countryside. In addition to the urban populace exercising its right to enjoy nature or even reserve some areas of the countryside for its leisure activities, government authorities at all levels intervene to regulate land use (even private property), to develop whole areas, to construct a dense infrastructure (which can ultimately transform the region, cf. the Italian Mezzogiorno), or, as more recently, to protect the environment.

The pervasive presence of the state and of other third parties signifies the emergence of a need for a collective consensus among the traditional inhabitants of a rural area.

2. A specific type of population

Demographic statistics represent a universal yardstick for assessing the development of a rural area. After the marked depopulation process which took place during the period of rapid economic growth, it appears that Europe is everywhere now witnessing a stabilization of its rural population, if not a slight positive growth in some areas. But in the wake of a period of rural-urban migration, the population remaining in the rural areas is an aged population: those who have grown old there and those who have retired and wish to end their lives in their home region or there where they spent their holidays throughout their working lives. In Great Britain, for example, it has been found that between 1961 and 1971 the proportion of over-60s in the overall population increased by 16% throughout the country but by 24% in rural areas.

In a milieu in which the elderly make up the majority of the population, the issue of training has to be formulated in terms of receptivity: the level of demand is low. This is a new problem within the training context, for training programmes have traditionally been designed for young people. However, the presence of retired people can also constitute a positive aspect from the training viewpoint: within this population group with its vast occupational experience we find numerous potential trainers and other agents of local development.

A second aspect of the population issue in rural areas is the low population density and the appearance, especially in France, of pockets of "desertification". Although the image of abandoned villages and hamlets undoubtedly cannot be projected to all of Europe, there exist vast regions where the population has almost declined to the minimum threshold below which all training measures become unthinkable. The documentation reveals no new communication technologies which could supply a response to the dispersion problem.

To some extent the consequence of an aging population and of emigration is that the education level prevailing in rural areas is generally lower than that found in urban areas. The wealth of opportunities offered diminishes with increasing distance from an urban centre. The training sector thus finds itself confronted with deficits and shortcomings in basic education. Reports from the Mediterranean countries stress the role of semi-illiteracy among the rural population, a form of illiteracy which mainly takes the form of an inability to communicate.

The percentage of unmarried persons of both sexes is higher in rural areas than in urban areas; this runs parallel with a higher incidence of physical and mental handicaps. The extended family system persists in rural areas, and it still occurs that three generations live under the same roof.

3. Rural society

We shall examine only some of the elements found in the documentation reviewed, namely those which represent the common, transnational denominators of rural societies. The entire extent of the manifold (real or imaginary) traits which distinguish rural populations from their urban neighbours lies beyond the scope of this description.

- Reference to a group

  The individual is identified by the group to which he belongs (inhabitants of the village, "are you from this region?", the local farmers, those farming the uplands, those farming the lowlands, etc.). Belonging to the group is inherited rather like an estate, and the cooperation which is a characteristic feature of rural communities functions among the members of the clan. The stranger, even after many years spent in the locality, always remains a person from elsewhere.

- Personalization of work, the enterprise, and institutions

  Land is regarded not as a capital asset but as a heritage which has supported and must continue to support a family line.

The farmer's work on land which is not his own personalizes that land to such an extent that he can even thereby acquire legally acknowledged rights over it. The school is identified with the teacher, the local administration with the mayor or the local clerk to the council. Small local enterprises are likewise personalized: a local going concern traditionally passed on from father to son loses its patrons when taken over by a stranger.

- Authority model

The farmer is alone responsible for the smooth running of the farm. With only little training in discussion and negotiation, people in rural areas tend to accept the existing order of things and are unlikely to question the prevailing hierarchy of values. The respective role of each individual is clearly defined, and any initiative to the effect of breaking with the past may immediately be considered as an aberration. In a rural area, everything has a public dimension. Thus training is not a private affair; it signifies a disruption in the milieu. Groups disband or are formed in the wake of innovation, not only technical innovation but also social innovation (e.g. the abandonment of Latin in Roman Catholic worship in the 1960s). Within the rural milieu, training sometimes represents a painful process of prising open the individual and society.

4. A particular type of surroundings

Rural surroundings are first of all described in negative terms: absence of the evils peculiar to large agglomerations (urban congestion, pollution, criminality). The village provides the framework for a different life rhythm, fragrances which change according to season, and also for activities which are less repetitive and whose significance is immediately apparent. The converse of urban anonymity, the village permits an existence within a human group in which each individual is known personally. Even private property has a social facade; decorating a house means upgrading the shared habitat just as a house conversion may signify the aesthetic destruction of the entire village.

Life in rural areas also signifies isolation. Paradoxically, it is the ease and convenience of transportation which promotes rural isolation: the people go elsewhere to shop, to meet, and to seek entertainment. Consequently, an entire local culture and the associated know-how disappear. The economic crisis leaves its mark in the form of the closure of the village school; the impression of white elephants can be gained from the number of empty public buildings and private houses. The trend towards owning a second house in the country implies an occupancy which brings no genuine life—the proprietors merely transpose their urban life patterns into a different framework.

The need to create a feeling of solidarity among the inhabitants, whether mere residents or those also working locally, calls for training in association management and collective action and motivation techniques.

Objective Needs of Working Life

Vocational training for rural populations is often reduced to training in agriculture and a number of other fields related to farming. Agricultural work is indeed predominant, but it is often the tree which obscures the wood, for in fact the entire range of occupations and professions is represented in rural areas, this sometimes to an unexpected extent. Women's activities are featured separately in the documentation since the rural female condition has virtually no urban equivalent.

1. Food production: the predominant activity

Food production is the predominant activity in rural areas; it mainly encompasses agricultural production but in some areas also takes in fishing and, more recently, aquaculture. Moreover, the region is often identified by its main produce: Normandy cheese, Highland lamb, New Zealand oysters, the white wines from the Luxembourg Moselle region.

Agricultural work is treated everywhere as being separate from the usual range of occupations and professions. The normal framework for its pursuit is the family farm. It is daily becoming more and more integrated into the national and indeed the European economy. Agricultural work is a link between the individual and his technical environment; the farmer himself, whether farmer proper, market gardener or animal breeder, displays an occupational profile which is universally similar.

A multiperson activity: running the family farm

Agricultural production takes place almost exclusively on the basis of a family holding. Wage-earners represent less than 10% of those working in agriculture, and this figure is declining steadily throughout Europe. The holding is always run by at least two related persons (husband, wife and children, or two brothers, or brother ard sister, parents and son). Other persons also contribute their labour without reward: more distant family members, the older generation. The assistance of more than one person is required not only for the production aspect but also for the day-to-day administration, for the head of a family farm combines the functions of head of production and farm worker.

The training for the work involved in agricultural production and day-to-day farm management requires cooperation between the farmer and his wife. Like the occupation, the training takes place on a multiperson basis.

Recent developments in the agricultural sector

There has been change first of all with regard to land and land tenure. The increased yields obtained in Europe in the post-war period have implied that land is no longer a hard-to-come-by asset: higher productivity can now achieve the same as farm extension in former times. Medium-size farms have become the general rule, with large and small farms now being exceptional cases. The state has elected to intervene in connection with the acquisition of agricultural land: on the one hand there is

a growing trend towards retiring from farming at a certain age now that the pension system has been extended to include the agricultural sector, and on the other hand government promotion measures have made it easier for young farmers to acquire or take over a farm. In numerous European countries, government plans confirm and guarantee the future status of agricultural land.

Although in some areas inheritance from the father is still the most common form of farmland acquisition, there is a marked trend in others towards undergoing a course of training prior to setting up in business as a farmer, just as is the case with respect to starting out in any other form of business enterprise. The traditional form of on-the-job training under the supervision of the father or father-in-law (the purpose of which was as much one of social control as one of occupational promotion) is no longer considered to be a sufficient preparation for coping with a sector in constant evolution.

The farm, too, has undergone a number of changes. The agricultural policy of the Community has been oriented towards extreme regional specialization. Consequently, the traditional type of holding based on multicropping combined with animal production has tended to disappear, taking with it the local dimension of the market. At the same time, increasing mechanization has reduced both the number of hands and the time required for production. These changes have tended to accentuate the irregular nature of agricultural work, with periods of high and low activity providing the basis for a further dimension in pluriactivity.

Technical training has more or less accompanied all these changes in the agricultural sector. The farmer of today has to be able to understand his machinery, and he cannot afford not

to master the basic concepts and language of chemistry and biology. The farmer of earlier days knew only two instruments of production: land and labour. The farmer of today, just like any other person running a business enterprise, has access to credit. Indebtedness, the curse of former times, is now current practice in farm management. The integration of the farm unit into its broader economic context, long-term planning, and decision-making represent further fields of training for farmers.

Nonetheless, the credit-investment cycle has also been quick to demonstrate its limitations. With respect to the increasingly precarious farm income, expectations which differ from the modest attitudes of former times are becoming widespread. The size of the holding should be such as to allow for some moments of respite, of relaxation, just as is usual in other occupations. The quality of rural life can compensate for the meagreness of income opportunities, and the farmer's autonomy, now increasingly abused both upstream and downstream, could again become a privilege of this particular occupation.

This refers us to a need which is being increasingly experienced throughout society, a need which is as vague in its substance as the notion of well-being. But there can be no justification for portraying agricultural work in idyllic terms: in some regions of Europe mere survival remains the primary need.

The farming milieu

In the occupations concerned with working the land, the routine tasks have to be supplemented with a continual assessment of factors both within and outside the farm. These "current affairs" within the occupation form the focal point of an informal occupational milieu where information from outside is filtered and experiences and innovations exchanged. This is the traditional form of training for farmers.

The need to observe and compare innovative production and management methods and techniques is a constant feature of the occupation: the local farmers are alone in a position to interpret the local production conditions.

The farmer

The instrument of work (broadly understood here to include a vineyard, a farm, a herd, or an orchard), is not merely a means of earning an income but instead represents a task to which the individual commits his entire self. Success or failure in this respect is the success or failure of a livelihood, not merely of an occupation. The farmer's means of earning his living is irreplaceable because it is with this that he identifies his very self. The dividing line between care and work is clouded in agricultural production because every activity relates in some way to the growth and development of a plant or an animal. Each "product" represents a special type of affective and cognitive investment.

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In view of the special nature of the tools of the trade concerned, continuing training for the farmer has to be the discovery of both the professional and the affective components of the occupation.

Where the concept of profitability is concerned, the farmer has his own opinion which differs from the objective view of any external expert. For an external assessor, labour should be regarded as one of the production costs and allocated a monetary value. Any period of excess work (representing a reduction in its value) can be justified by the farmer undergoing a difficult period because it is ultimately the survival of the holding which is at stake. It is the farmer himself who determines the threshold of profitability, if necessary below the generally accepted level.

Training in economics for farmers is an attempt to assist individuals in implementing or in some cases salvaging a personal business venture.

With regard to education, it has been found that the rural population generally has a lower standard of education than the urban population. A typical person in a rural area has acquired from school experience the view that book-learning is of little value and that he had to become a farmer because school qualifications are of no importance in this occupation. His vocational training is confined to learning a number of skills, sleights of hand and perceptive acuity with regard to his daily contact with reality. His school knowledge has long been shelved; the milieu in which he lives tends to foster this modern form of illiteracy typified by an inability to interpret facts and to communicate.[1]

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1 Document of the European Community COM (81) 769 Final, 15 December 1981.

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2. Non-agricultural activities

The fact that the notion of rural area is frequently equated with that of agriculture gives the impression that the rural population is composed almost exclusively of farmers assisted by a few others engaged in occupations located immediately upstream or downstream of agriculture. This is indeed a false impression. Of 1 000 working persons in rural areas, only 30% are farmers (the figure only just reaches 50% even in very remote rural communities); some 35% are engaged in the secondary sector and the remaining 35% work in the tertiary sector. These figures are taken from one of the rare statistical documents available; they represent an estimate and relate to France. A further example relating to a small rural community in Germany (Sasbach Gemeinde, 1979) reveals that of all young adults between 16 and 27 years of age, only 3% are engaged in agriculture and almost one quarter work in the tertiary sector. In 1970, the agricultural population already represented no more than between 20% and 35% of the total population of small villages in the Federal Republic of Germany. [1]

A cross-section of the working population in any rural region in Europe would disclose a large number of non-agricultural activities and occupations: garages, mechanical engineering workshops, service stations, cafés, small restaurants, retail commerce establishments (in particular for domestic electrical appliances), small local construction firms; various professional persons are also represented, e.g. teachers, police officers, local government personnel, central government personnel,

1 Planck,Ulrich. Der Wandel der ländlichen Berufsstruktur in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland, dargestellt an den Veränderungen innerhalb der Landjugend zwischen 1955 und 1980. Eur. Kong. Ländl. Soziol.,Helsinki, August 1981.

local representatives of the social services, insurance companies, and finance institutions, physicians, veterinary surgeons, and judicial officers. Despite this variety, "one is astonished by the high degree to which agricultural activities have been analyzed, and conversely, one is shocked by the lack of analytical material on non-agricultural activities, with the tertiary sector often being content merely to record the presence or absence of a shoemaker or baker."[1]

The working population in any surveyable rural area thus has an extremely heterogeneous composition. Two major categories of person can be distinguished: those who live and work locally and those who merely live locally but work elsewhere. For the first category, the sectoral training offered by various occupational associations may give consideration to the special features deriving from the fact that the occupation is pursued in a rural area, for example the personalization of services, or the importance of regional survival. For the second category, the rural milieu places no constraints on their occupational pursuits; they create the outer suburbs which are penetrating ever deeper into the countryside. It is probable that the competitive and individual type of vocational training is more common within this category.

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1 POUR No 82, April 1982, p. 79.

3. Women's work in rural areas

The major part of the documentation dealing with women in rural areas examines their living conditions, not their vocational training situation. This can be explained mainly by the fact that female work on agricultural holdings or in family businesses does not seem like a real occupation; in the same way, numerous services run by women in rural areas are not carried out in return for payment.

On a family farm, the functions discharged by the wife of the farmer are threefold: mother, housekeeper, and farmworker. The place of work is at the same time the place of residence: there is therefore no dividing line between her farming activities and household activities. Her working hours are elastic, and the care and maintenance of the farm rest in her hands. The wife's participation in running the farm likewise takes numerous forms: in the first instance it is she who lends a hand when immediate assistance is required, and she sometimes works an excessive number of hours; many such women also bear permanent responsibility for a particular part of the farm; the farmer's wife also serves as the secretary and the administrative memory of the farm.

All that has just been stated with respect to the wife of a farmer could likewise be applied to the wives of those running a craft business or other type of small enterprise in a rural area: the wife runs a permanent information service and serves as business spokesman and troubleshooter.

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In addition to assisting with the family business, the wife also plays an active part in the life of the local community: health, education, recreation. On a voluntary basis or for a merely nominal remuneration she renders a range of services which are more or less imposed by the nature of the environment: childminding, care of the elderly, cleaning and care of public buildings. A French document even reports that for a woman pursuing a paid occupation in a rural area there is always an imposed need for overqualification.

Training for women in rural areas should give due consideration to four aspects of the female condition:

- the confusion between work and duties in the multiple roles which the wife of a farmer or artisan has to assume,
- the psychological isolation resulting from the control exerted by rural society,
- the constraints of the neighbourhood,
- social and legal inferiority.

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Thus, to summarize, objective vocational training needs can be divided into two categories:

- sectoral needs for training in agriculture
- the training needs imposed by the rural surroundings.

In the aggregate of all the training needs encountered in rural areas, it is training in agriculture which accounts for the major part. In several countries of Europe, training in agriculture is the only specificity of the rural area. Training needs are mainly of two types: those linked with agricultural production and those linked with farm management. The regions of intense agricultural production (cereals, fruit, animal production) are becoming increasingly specialized in one specific type of produce; however, monoproduction is a precarious exercise and therefore requires a continual and individualized updating and upgrading of technical knowledge and skills. The medium-size family farm, the most commonly found production structure, is integrated within a restrictive economic framework: finance and inputs upstream, the European market downstream.

The rural milieu requires of its inhabitants a certain mastery of the art of community living; it therefore creates a need for training in collective action. Those who work locally and also those who merely live locally but work elsewhere are concerned by the use which individuals, farmers and the authorities make of local land. Similarly, any innovative measure almost always assumes a public dimension and may provoke resistance from the local population. In areas having a population density below a certain threshold, one encounters the withdrawal of services, a decline in activities and the loss of the cultural and intellectual heritage. The local public bears a certain collective responsibility for preserving that heritage. Habitat, cultural life and the world of work form one entity in rural areas and therefore call for a specific, unifying approach to training.

PART TWO: TRAINING RESPONSE

Training for Farmers

Composed to 90% of family farms, from the vocational training viewpoint the agricultural sector displays one feature which is common among small and medium enterprises: it is one and the same person who owns the farm (or at least the operating assets), who manages it, who looks after the production, who negotiates the sale of the produce, and who reinvests the profits. Human capital in the form of labour and agricultural knowledge is scattered over hundreds of thousands of farmers whose produce ranges from olives in southern Italy to wool in Scotland. Agricultural training therefore has to cover aspects of production, management and marketing; agricultural knowledge, often closely related to local production conditions, is shared as much by the trainees as by the trainers.

1. Training supply and demand

Training demand

None of the documents on agricultural training in Europe reported a spontaneous demand for training in agriculture. If such a demand exists, it would indeed be exceptional. The statistical indices of the affected or interested target groups are low; displaying some cynicism, one report states that "people have never spoken so much of training needs as since training opportunities were made available". A survey conducted in France on the recruitment of trainees for training courses reveals that none of the groups of farmers had convened spontaneously to organize a meeting on any particular matter of interest. In one way or another, the

demand for training had been provoked or even imposed. A training course of two hundred hours' duration is required in France as a condition for granting subsidies and loans for setting up a new farming unit. More generally, the usual practice is for training in economics to become quasi-mandatory for access to very-low-interest loans and other financial benefits. In addition to direct measures generating a demand for training, there is also the demand induced by internal changes on the farm, modifications in the local production structure, and the need to learn about innovations.

The only demand which one could genuinely refer to as spontaneous emanates from persons from a non-agricultural background. This is a very localized type of demand but its dimensions have been increasing steadily in line with the renewed interest in agricultural activities evident since the mid-1970s.

Training provision

As is the case with respect to other occupations, the training provision for the agricultural occupations has been completely institutionalized in all EC Member States. Likewise common to all countries is the fact that this provision is the result of a compromise between numerous partners who are concerned to implement a national and European agricultural policy. An instrument of such a policy, the training system is therefore shared by the local and regional authorities, employers' associations, the trade unions, the insurance institutions, cooperatives, and also the local training associations which may discharge an advisory function.

Despite this institutionalization, the training provision is by no means uniform, nor is there any homogeneous corps of trainers.

Those responsible for the various organizations for farmers are normally non-farmers; whether technical advisors, extensionists or instructors, these organizers are all white-collar personnel bearing data and methods obtained or tested elsewhere.

These various qualifications in fact correspond to successive (but not necessarily chronologically distinct) periods in the policy pursued throughout the European Community with respect to the agricultural holding. Three currents can be discerned:

- the effort to increase unit profitability, i.e. make the farm an increasingly productive tool by means of modernization (mechanization, soil upgrading measures, improved seeds, species and fertilizers, product specialization) and eliminating unprofitable units. From this viewpoint, the training provision is regarded as instruction in farming methods, the fundamental chemical and biological processes, and mechanical skills.
- the effort to understand and unify the approach to farming, i.e. to direct the farmer towards shaping his farm to conform with enterprises in any other sector. Here, the training provision focuses on management instruction . The farmer who is able to regard his farm as a business project is

trained to reason in terms of credit and debt ratios, market niches, etc.

- an effort to integrate the unit into the development of local job-creating activities, i.e. to make farming become a driving force in the local economy. With this purpose in mind, there were recommendations for small-scale local processing of agricultural produce and the revitalization of traditional forms of manufacturing; there were calls for the installation of small centres for research into new forms of energy production, a field of major interest to the agricultural sector. Drawing on an idea parallel to this concept of a living museum, farmers were invited to participate in managing natural parks, formerly untouchable reserves. The training provision takes the form of motivation towards new ideas; the local development officer provides access to specialists in ancient and modern skills, in marketing techniques, or in opening rural life and the farm to the tourist public.

With an induced demand for training and professional, external organizers, it might be easy to believe that farmers are having a training system imposed on them. Doubt is even cast on the representativeness of the trade unions and the professional associations, "for being the only voice in the agricultural world and wanting to promote the aspirations of all, they in fact do nothing other than promote their own." The image of a training system rather like a foreign body within an organism is perhaps overportrayed on account of the fact that the most important documents on training have been written by persons operating from the outside in order to introduce innovative ideas and methods. It is virtually impossible to prepare a reliable

survey of the training provision for farmers because of the confusion prevailing between training measures proper, experimental projects, ad hoc initiatives, and the contours of the training measures of tomorrow.

2. Training in agriculture: objectives and methods

When charting out the objectives and methods encountered in the training provision for farmers, there is a need to make a clear distinction between concrete measures, utopias, and the substance of ascent forms of training. Between the vocational training provided in the Mezzogiorno (referred to by de Schutter and Cortesse[1] as the casualty ward of the schooling system) and the integration of the farming population into the adult education system in the Federal Republic of Germany, there is such a vast expanse that one can hardly reason in terms of one European approach to training in agriculture.

a. Principles and objectives

In the first instance there are the general principles of continuing adult education:

- an alternance approach encompassing practical work in the occupation and a training course, the focal point of the training;
- the individual is considered to be capable of self-instruction
- the trainer and the trainee share their knowledge.

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1 De Schutter R. and Cortesse V. Formation professionnelle et emploi. Mezzogiorno, Italie, Fonds Social Européen, 1980, p. 173.

Training is a continuous process in which the training course proper provides an opportunity for the trainee to step back and regard his activity from a different perspective. Judged against this yardstick, chasing obscure successes or seeking out disparate information cannot be regarded as training in the proper sense of the term.

Then there is a second consideration, namely that vocational training for farmers displays three inseparable aspects: the technical, the economic, and the social.

With regard to the objectives of agricultural training, these are fundamentally two: social advancement and accurate judgement. A German survey conducted in 1977 charts out future training for farmers by making a distinction between individual qualifications and social qualifications:

- individual qualifications
  - . mental agility
  - . skill in judgement
  - . skill in identifying correlations between modes of reasoning
  - . skill in decision-making
  - . skill in formulating projects
- social qualifications
  - . expérience of a need for cooperation and association (including within the marriage and family life)
  - . skill in cooperating with others
  - . ease in relations with others
  - . ability to communicate with democratically elected representatives.

A description of the objectives of agricultural training in Italy strikes the same note: to provide the individual with the ability to interpret a system of interrelations; training is the source of culture, change, and a more open attitude. One element, however, does betray the special situation prevailing in this country: compensating for deficient schooling (arithmetic and written and oral expression) emerges as the necessary point of departure in any training venture designed for the farming population.

A document on training for women in rural areas of France in fact recounts the ultimate objective of all training efforts: "To reject a type of education which is confined to instruction in skills in favour of one in which these skills are related to knowledge of a scientific nature and represent a path of access to economic, historical, geographical, even philosophical and political realities". The objective has always been to allow the individual to retain or regain his unity, to remain or acquire an ability to be responsible for his own actions.

b. Methodological findings

Identification of needs

To approach training from the needs viewpoint is to make a false start. Firstly, bearing in mind that training demand almost always emerges in response to a stimulus, such demand does not necessarily exist a priori, or the description given by the person experiencing the need for training may be nebulous. In either instance, the trainer will reformulate

inacceptably imprecise concepts or will impose his own ideas, all the more easily if he finds himself dealing with a group lacking all internal cohesiveness. More importantly, the training is in danger of being short-circuited by diminishing the scope of a course to fit the training needs expressed. The correct approach to training must depart from the situation of the farmer himself and the problems involved within that situation. The role of the trainer here is initially that of an analyst; at a subsequent stage his purpose will be to promote reflection with a view to guiding the individual towards designing a training project and discovering where his shortcomings and, by extension, his training needs, lie. Finally, to complete the training process, the trainer acts as a management consultant to accommodate the training project within the external economic framework.

Language

Trainers express their knowledge by means of a technical code which is filtered with a view to universal application. For their part, farmers tend to express themselves in a language which is impregnated with affective terms. Postponing the deadline for a payment, for example, is a routine operation for a management consultant but a shameful and embarrassing necessity for the farmer. Weights and areas are not necessarily expressed in terms of kilogrammes or acres but as a function of trailer-loads or man/days.

Reconciling these two languages is a precondition for acknowledging the instrumental value of any tool of reflection (a concept, process, or method of calculation).

Theory and practice

Finding the exact balance between theory and practice seems to be a controversal pedagogic issue with respect to training for farmers. For the trainee, theory (here again a question of terminology) is first of all something which does not apply to him, an ideal situation, a well-ordered schedule as opposed to that which he encounters in his daily work in the form of a succession of varied tasks. Theory is also knowledge which has been developed beyond the farmer's visual range, something which he has not seen and which has not been "validated" by his local fellow-farmers. Elements considered by the trainer to be of negligible importance may be extremely significant in the eyes of the trainee. There can be no training which does not take the trainee out of his known world, but at the same time there can be no training which fails to make reference to that world.

Training schedule and training venue

This issue must revolve around the training sessions, the training courses and the study days, for training is a continuing process and its time and place can be none other than the farm itself.

Despite the difficulties with respect to the continuity of work on the farm, removal from the farm for a session of several days' duration is considered to be beneficial by virtue of the wealth of contacts which can be made in the extramural periods (meals, evenings) and the experience of the community spirit which develops under such circumstances. Isolated days dealing with disparate subjects are far removed from training, a view which seems to preclude from training a large number of existing extension measures. The rhythm of training in agriculture is determined by the seasonal cycles imposed by the biological production process.

3. Special target groups

Two special target groups for training measures in rural areas will be described: women and persons with a non-agricultural background.

a. Women

Women in rural areas represent a special case within the training context, this being a consequence of their multiple role on the farm (household, family, farm production) and also of the fact that women are often the source of local development initiatives. A specific approach therefore has to be adopted in connection with their training. Unlike in the case of the farmer, for whom training forms

part of an occupational upgrading scheme within the framework of a national project to modernize agricultural production and farm management, training for women in rural areas responds to a general criterion of society. The same applies to the training provision for women: there is no criterion of immediate cost-effectiveness to be observed in connection with the training offered to women in rural areas; moreover, there is no occupational milieu.

Training demand

The training demand prevailing among women in rural areas manifests itself as a threefold quest:

- a quest for autonomy and recognition: the training is not intended to provide a formal qualification but greater knowledge and skill which can be applied to activities already carried out by the women either on the farm or within the community;
- a quest for a broader outlook and education: the training seeks to afford the woman a degree of psychological security and confidence which enables her to develop outwards;
- a quest for a model for rural living: the training is intended to afford women a social status which serves as the basis for their participation in constructing a different framework for living.

Defining the boundaries between productive work for the farm and family/household work causes the farmer's wife to classify and compare occupations, to differentiate be-

tween labour and duty, and to gain a certain measure of perspective with regard to each of her roles. This approach to training is in line with the rationalization process on the farm: the accounting, for example, would not be correct if the hours worked and their cost were not recorded, irrespective of whether the husband or the wife worked them. The outcome of the training might be a shift in investment priorities or a reorganization of the holding which takes into account the work invested by the farmer's wife.

The examination of day-to-day tasks provokes an exchange of old and new knowledge, an objective analysis of processes with an affective or traditional dimension , and the identification of the tasks "reserved" for women by the local community. Some of these tasks with their profound communal element (e.g. washing the laundry at the public wash-house) have disappeared in the wake of the privatization process, but others could succeed them. The experience gained as a wife and mother represents a fund of knowledge which can be pooled by organizing neighbourhood services, the first step in a process of opening up the outside world and ensuring public recognition of latent capacities and abilities.

The ultimate objective of training for women living in rural areas is to remove the obstacles which still prevent them from participating in the construction of a different mode of rural living which gives due consideration to the profitability of the farm and the value of personal and social relations within the community.

The strengthening of the personality of the trainee seems to be the central aspect of training for women in rural areas. Furthermore, the training advances by means of graduated steps and is not independent of the parallel evolution taking place in the external context (family, other women, milieu).

Insofar, training in the expression of ideas is as important as acquiring knowledge. Difficulty in written or oral expression is a handicap commonly encountered in rural areas, but its incidence is notoriously high among women with little or only mediocre schooling. Ease of personal presentation is also part of the overcompetence required of women.

Accordingly, primary emphasis in training is placed not on the accumulation of knowledge but on mastery of the instruments of reasoning. The ability to relate and perceive interrelationships is of primordial importance: to understand the correlation between knowledge, know-how, and their application.

The group plays a more important role in training for women. In many cases, the woman has to tear herself away from her milieu; the training results in the redefinition of the woman's role, hence its disruptive dimension and efficiency. However, the training should not be scheduled for men and women separately, for some questions are not even raised unless women are encouraged to participate in training traditionally reserved for men.

b. Target groups with a non-agricultural background

This target group, which emerged quite suddenly towards the mid-1970s, is made up of individuals who wish to retrain for work in agriculture. The size of the movement became such that an enquiry had already been launched in France by 1975. From the viewpoint of its origin, this category of intending farmers is very heterogeneous (workers in the food processing industry, unemployed city youths, white-collar workers, clerical staff), and their integration into agriculture therefore has to be very much an individual affair. As with respect to agriculture in general, here too there is a need for relativizing the role of training within the broader overall problem complex faced by this group (which includes the question as to its very right to training).

The training needs of this group are immediate, and training may indeed be a prerequisite before any further step can be taken. Insofar, the training demand emanating from this group is in clear contrast to that emanating from the general body of farmers: it is a spontaneous and intensive demand which relates to all aspects of the occupation and its environment (and which may in extreme instances develop into a critical investigation of situations and methods).

The main problem in providing training for this special type of target group is of an organizational nature, but this is a normal, temporary shortcoming resulting from the fact that this particular demand is but a recent phenomenon. In the longer term, there will be occasion for the non-agri-

cultural target group to raise more fundamental questions as to the content and pedagogic approach to be adopted. The motivation experienced by this group is just as much professional (to change occupation or create work) as it is aesthetic (the desire to experience a new mode of living and pursue an occupation which calls for creativity, initiative, and responsibility). Compared with those who are already engaged in farming, these persons of course have much to make up from the viewpoint of the day-to-day routine of the occupation; however, many have the advantage of bringing with them skills and abilities from a different occupation.

Training Measures Linked With Local Development

A common feature of the local development projects now found in abundance throughout Europe is their claim to transform a rural population into a rural community and afford the region a nostalgic, homely character.

This transformation is in the first instance of a bottom-up type: the local population serves as the driving force in the development process. This is evident as soon as the project zone is defined, for an area which the population perceives as a separate entity will be preferred to any administrative delimitation. Then, far from being presented with a "turnkey" project, the population is invited to participate in a joint process of research. The purpose here is to reconcile the economic interest with the cultural interest. To reanimate a region is more than merely to revive a traditional or introduce a new activity, it also presupposes that a living milieu can be regenerated. The notion of culture may be confusing; initiatives to promote interpersonal relations go hand in hand with others to rediscover a common past. To live and work in one and the same entity is a prospect which, as such, is not confined to the rural population; nonetheless, it is more likely to be realized in a rural area. There is more than merely a difference in scale between local development and regional development. Local development draws on a voluntary policy of action on the part of the population concerned with a view to formulating a suitable concept for its living and working environment. The training here is made up initially of measures to mobilize the population for community action; thereafter, it serves to meet the requirements generated by the initiation and implementation of the development project itself.

1. Pre-project motivation measures

Representing a kind of pre-project training phase, this motivation work is intended to reconstitute the local social fabric. Experience reports from France and Italy attach major importance to this phase, for the success of the project ultimately depends on the degree to which the local population can be motivated in its favour. The organizer, who may or may not be a local person, is the main figure in this process. His task is to sensitize the local population to the problem at hand, to reconstitute the region's historical dimension, to collect the available data and prepare a diagnosis of the situation. At the same time, he is also required to assess local skills and other human resources, to take stock of active and dormant associations, and to identify areas of common interest and conflict. As the final step in this preliminary phase, the organizer formulates the community's problems and establishes contact with the outside world, i.e. the relevant administrative and economic bodies.

It should be noted that this preliminary phase incorporates no training as such nor any target group as such. In a project conducted in France, for example, anyone interested in improving life in the local community was invited to join in a session to reflect on what should be done. This of course does not imply that the training element is completely absent from this project phase: raising the awareness level of the local population makes for a training process in communication, self-expression, and group discussion; likewise, the initiation of new activities in the region implies a training process in the analysis of problems and local resources.

2. Training during the project

One preliminary observation must be made in this respect, namely, that many development projects have never proceeded beyond the motivation phase, which, under certain circumstances, has lasted as long as two or three years. The novelty of the concept of local development obliges a French report to observe the following shortcoming: "An educational approach linked with a revitalization process is virtually inexistant". It is not easy in training measures to support development projects to make a distinction between the concrete and the planned and intended.

A provisional evaluation of the local development projects implemented throughout Europe, but more particularly in France and Italy, would indicate that virtually all have focu..d on organizing a second activity for the existing population rather than creating new sources of work which might attract jobseekers into the locality. Primary emphasis is thus placed on raising the incomes of the local working population and preventing the number of inhabitants from falling below a critical threshold. A concern to attract new activities into the region is undoubtedly not absent, but it is rather the rediscovered vitality of the region which is to attract such new activities.

Alongside the priority attached to pluriactivity, which represents the main aspect of such development projects, an important role is also conceded to providing training for local elected representatives, local authority personnel, and the staff of the administrative services.

Plur activity

Pluriactivity in rural areas is by no means a new phenomenon. From the beginning of time farmers have made use of the slack periods in agricultural production by pursuing a second activity, usually forestry. In the EC Member States, pluriactivity assumes a family dimension, with farming being the principal preoccupation. In many instances, development projects merely effect a reorganization of the secondary activities carried out by one or other member of the family: long-forgotten modes of production or crafts may be revived and restored to honour. The resources peculiar to the region (medicinal or aromatic herbs, wool, forest essences, etc.) can provide a broad basis for shaping various approaches to pluriactivity.[1]

From the training viewpoint, the situation focuses not on the secondary activity of the individual but on the pluriactivity of the group. Considerations regarding personal interdependence, the assignment of roles within the family, and the sharing of responsibility therefore prevail. The weighting of each activity, managing the time factor, and the allocation of income call for training in management; the sale of new products is a problem which often calls for training in joint marketing to be included within the project.

1 FAO. Experiences and policies of rural pluriactivity in Europe, 22nd Session. The European Commission of Agriculture, Rome, June 1982.

The local administration

The local elected representatives, local authority personnel, and local dignitaries and administration officers constitute a second target group for training within the framework of a local development project. Although not directly involved in the implementation of the project, these persons are situated at the very spot where the local administrative and political wheels are set in motion, and their power to block or accelerate initiatives is greatly reinforced by the very number of different administrations and organizations set up to cater for a restricted area, each of which is responsible for only one specific sector of rural life.

The training for these administrative agents is mainly intended to introduce work attitudes favouring cooperation. Training in consulting the general public is a further area of emphasis in connection with such projects, for these may in fact reveal a deficit in analytical capacities among those responsible for running local affairs.

3. Training content

A consensus prevails with regard to the content of the training provided in connection with local development projects. Except in very rare cases in which the objective is specifically to provide unemployed persons with the wherewithals for earning a livelihood, the training is primarily intended to have a human, personal dimension, not to be confined to acquiring a qualification. It is the individual who is addressed, not the individual as a working being.

The projects implemented to date have been conducted in disadvantaged regions—isolated, peripheral or otherwise devitalized areas. All considerations have therefore been directed towards the future of the entire locality, not towards the reactivation of one specific sector. A keyword in this process is "desectorization". In addition to creating income-generating activities, the projects introduce new concepts regarding social values: quality of life, social and personal roots, work satisfaction.

The training provision for those who are to play an active part in developing their locality is based on two considerations: learning to reason and act independently and learning to communicate. The effect of rural isolation, difficulty in self-expression and the personalization of institutions in rural areas has been a high degree of delegation of responsibility. The training offered in connection with a local development project must seek to encourage the individual to take charge of his own future and also the future of the community in which he works. The framework for living and that for working are in any case often synonymous in rural areas. To be able to reason and act independently implies a need to develop the spirit of individual initiative and also to afford the population the means to shape and control its own future. It appears that the residents whose place of work is elsewhere take no part in the training.

A continual process of learning to communicate represents the basis of all types of training.In practice, the implementation of a local development project is normally the responsibility of a group of persons. Formulating needs, structuring them into a joint programme, reviving local culture, organizing the project, and implementing new activities are all occasions for the population to express itself orally or in writing or indeed to discover its own spokesmen.

4. Educational action

The principle of educational action can be summarized in the simple phrase "remain within the field."

During the first stage, the training measures are indistinguishable from the micro-regional development measures. Micro-regional development is in fact nothing more than a collective training process which incorporates three elements:

- production and distribution of information on the region;
- familiarization of the population with its socioeconomic situation, i.e. provision of the necessary instrumentarium for analysis and comprehension;
- education of the population to the effect that it becomes capable of making choices and identifying the development options which have the most favourable prospects of success.

In principle, all disciplines (history, economics, administration, etc.) and all methodological approaches (analytical, dialectic, etc.) are useful in this initial period. The role of the trainer is to select the most suitable training contents for any given situation.

During the second stage, training measures are more distinct from development measures, with the development process becoming a series of precise tasks with its own implementation agents. The range of training content is broad: training in connection with the management of the project (e.g. training

in pre-action procedures), training in connection with the establishment of new activities (e.g. marketing, administration, tax affairs), and the training required by a whole range of often very specialized activities.

The unsuitability of a sectoral training approach for small, disadvantaged population groups is generally acknowledged in the relevant documentation, but none of the reports offers an alternative. Nor can there be any real question of innovative educational approaches. Numerous experiments with local development projects indicate that the population group concerned is still largely composed of persons who are in any case inclined to participate in collective research and action initiatives.

Closing Observations

Local development projects have served to give expression to specific expectations regarding an innovative approach to training in rural areas. A number of observations must be made in this connection.

1. The situation concerned here is exceptional and does not relate to any permanent activity. A development project is born, meets with diverse fortunes, and then either disintegrates or itself becomes integrated. Into what? It is still too early to state what becomes of the rural community once the project is terminated or declared to be terminated. Moreover, many of these projects are still at the mobilization stage in which training as such has no specific role to play and is therefore not the focal point of concern.

2. The population groups involved in the training during the course of the project are not as diverse as was originally anticipated and announced. It will be recalled that two-thirds of any rural community is normally engaged in the secondary and tertiary sectors; accordingly, it might have been expected that the owners of small businesses and craftsmen would everywhere emerge as a specific target group, because one of the major elements of the social fabric which the project seeks to reconstitute is precisely that ensured by a widely diversified range of activities and occupations. It is found, however, that commercial training is reduced to the sale of farm produce and the artisan crafts are considered to have warranted only a few isolated initiatives. The development project which set out initially to satisfy the training needs of rural

communities ultimately proved to satisfy those of the farming population; in many instances, no progress has been attempted beyond the sectoral, i.e. agricultural approach. In general terms, there is a wide discrepancy between theory and practice: "In practice, ... the issue which led the local community to define a coherent programme of priorities is dodged; either the locality or the nature of the programme is adapted accordingly".[1]

3. The objective of training, namely to afford the individual the ability to assume responsibility for his own situation and that of the community in which he lives, presents nothing which might be considered specifically rural. Occupational success in any field depends on an ability to master one's relations with the economic and social environment, and training is one means of acquiring that mastery. But, unlike in urban areas, the economic and social environment in rural areas is not fragmented: habitat, personal relations, public services, and professional relations all combine to form one whole. The training perspective in local development projects, embracing as it does both the individual dimension and the collective dimension, is indeed novel, but still has to be transposed into reality.

4. Major emphasis is placed on motivating the rural population. However, it should be recalled that only very few projects have so far been completed and that, theoretically, the role of such motivation measures should diminish as the project proper advances.

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1 Vocational Training in Rural Areas: France, p. 8.

The reports observe that the function of the project organizers responsible for the motivation activities, who should play a temporary and discreet role, tends to become identified with the project and remain as a permanent structure. Does training then assume secondary importance? It is in any event difficult to evaluate the importance of the training: how does one set about measuring an increase in community confidence vis-à-vis its future or an increase in the collective capacity for assessing a situation and formulating viable solutions?

5. An undercurrent of militancy, non-conformism and the critical questioning of prevailing values and objectives is a characteristic feature of all the projects. A biodynamic agriculture project in Campania, Italy, for example, resolutely attributed greater importance to non-measurable objectives (quality of life, social and cultural reactivation, environmental considerations) than to economic objectives. Although not economical from a strictly commercial viewpoint, this project is seen to demonstrate how rural development can embrace more than merely agricultural development. The training emanating from these local development projects is likewise experimental and disruptive insofar as it is diametrically opposed to the individual and competitive approach to training.

CONCLUSION

The approach to vocational training in rural areas differs from country to country within the Community. In some Member States, the issue is not explicitly formulated. In others, France and Italy for example, training in rural areas is equated with that for disadvantaged areas. Terminological inaccuracy is a frequent phenomenon in the documentation: the rural milieu is reduced to the rural region, and despite an endeavour to transcend the simplistic equation of the notion of "rural" with that of "agricultural", the issue ultimately becomes one of training for those engaged in agriculture. It will be recalled that these persons represent only one-third of the working population in rural areas.

The occupation of farmer calls for a type of continuing training which is different from that required in other occupations. Firstly, the constant developments in agriculture more or less deprive of its substance the distinction between initial training and continuing training, all the more so since on-the-job training remains the most common form of induction in this occupation. Secondly, the occupation, the milieu, and the family seem to be indissociable in agricultural training. The technical, the economic, and the cultural—these three elements are increasingly being regarded as forming one whole, just as the place of work, the living surroundings, and social milieu likewise form one whole. This raises the question as to why political education is not included as a fourth element in training for those engaged in agriculture.

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Parallel to this sectoral, agricultural approach to training which is widely found throughout Europe in the form of individualized technical extension work, training projects for communities are being developed on the basis of local rural revitalization projects. In principle, these are training measures which are intended for all the population, working or non-working (although this distinction is irrelevant in rural areas). Unlike others, however, these measures are not intended to provide specific qualifications required in an employment; numerous activities in rural areas are not even considered as employment, the most evident being the work carried out by farmers' wives. These training measures give the impression that occupations other than agricultural will ultimately be catered for. However, the experiments completed to date are still insufficient in number for any conclusive evaluation of the innovative training contents which they offer.

Hitherto confined to disadvantaged regions, development projects, by virtue of the community spirit which they seek to develop, represent a response to the general situation prevailing in rural areas throughout Europe, where community life finds itself under threat. The village is the home of ever fewer occupations but the home of ever more elderly persons and commuters. The social fabric, which draws support from occupational diversity, is becoming increasingly impoverished. Similarly, the monoproduction approach to farming imposed by a concern for unit profitability has implied the abandonment of numerous minor activities which were traditionally part of life on the farm. Projects such as the village rehabilitation projects being carried out in Germany represent efforts to reintegrate that section of the population which is rural by virtue of its domicile but whose work and social life is carried out elsewhere. Part-time farming is a further initiative in the same direction.

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The sectoral approach to training in agriculture and the training initiatives generated by local development projects share one and the same ultimate objective: the training is intended to assist the individual in acquiring skill in judgement and developing a certain community spirit. The latter ultimately seems to be the only element which is specific to training in rural areas. But despite a number of common features, even the rural milieu differs distinctly from one region to another. Firstly, there are the differing circumstances from country to country. Initial training in agriculture in the Netherlands or in Denmark is not the same as the instruction provided in the agricultural vocational schools in Italy. The same is true in physical terms too, for to speak of rural isolation in a country such as Belgium is to speak of something far removed from the isolation experienced in a high Alpine valley.

The training needs prevailing in rural communities are not immediate, not tangible. To encourage them to become so is the responsibility of the local populations themselves.

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